

# PLAYS AND PICTURES SHARE THE INTEREST OF THEATRE GOERS

## TOO MUCH TECHNIQUE CAN HURT A PLAY AS WELL AS LACK OF THIS ESSENTIAL

Augustus Thomas Interfered With the Enduring Success of 'Nemesis' by Overemphasis of the Device Known as 'Preparation.'

By LAWRENCE REAMER.

ONE often hears the failure of a play attributed to the inadequate technique of the author. This explanation comes usually from some critical authority, since managers pretend a profound scorn for such elements in a drama. Correct construction is generally a joke to them if one of their plays succeeds without seeming to possess this quality. If, on the other hand, one of their enterprises meets with favor because it possesses these advantages, the entrepreneurs can discourse learnedly of their acumen in recognizing them. But they have rarely been heard to deplore the presence of too much technique. It is, of course, a fault in any art.

But it seems that Augustus Thomas interfered with the enduring success of 'Nemesis' by emphasizing too strongly the device that has been described as "preparation." It rests on the theory that the mind of the spectator in a theatre must be prepared by suggestions, intimations and by the acting for what is going to happen. He is supposed to be aware of what will take place in a play before the characters know. He keeps ahead of them, according to the authorities, to such a degree that the success or failure of a play to win popularity has often been attributed to the exactness with which it conforms to the expectations of the spectator.

In 'Nemesis' Mr. Thomas had to prepare the spectators for the murder by a middle aged business man of the wife who had been unfaithful to him. Of course, it took a considerable degree of paving the way to make the audience accept as possible anything so far removed from our ordinary experience nowadays. Men do still murder their unfaithful wives, of course, but they are usually passionate, headstrong, ignorant or criminal men who surrender to rage or jealousy without thought of the future. But Mr. Thomas' hero was no longer young and a successful man of business.

So the playwright sought to ameliorate the improbability of this situation by making the guilty love of the young wife and the reckless devotion of her suitor as plain as possible to the spectators. The consequence was so many devices of "preparation" that the public weaned of them. It is certain that the audience knew after their first interview that the lovers were hopelessly infatuated with one another.

After the husband's interview with his butler, his own jealousy was just as obvious as the guilt of the two lovers. Yet Mr. Thomas was evidently unwilling to take any chances. He wanted to show how the love of the two could drive the husband to such an unusual crime.

### Iteration Grows Wearisome.

So he kept on making it plain that the wife loved the sculptor and that he returned her love and that the silent husband was getting ready all the time to perpetrate a terrible revenge on them. Over and over again was this situation meticulously suggested to the mind by language or presented to the eye. Since the spectators had grasped the whole situation of these three persons before the first act was half finished, this iteration grew wearisome. It was fatal to interest. Mr. Thomas had endowed his play with too much technique.

It always is interesting to observe the change in the psychology of audiences. Would Mr. Thomas' careful preparation seem excessive a score of years ago? Has the public grown so alert that it now grasps at once an idea which the playwright years ago found it necessary to implant laboriously, although the most skilled among them usually contrived to conceal the effort? Victorien Sardou carried the development of this device further than any of his colleagues in the writing of the well made play, although he found it comparatively complete, especially among the authors of melodrama for the French stage.

In the English theatre Pinero used the trick with greater mastery than any of his rivals. He carried it further in 'The Benefit of the Doubt' than in any of his other plays. Students of such subjects will find Sardou's employment of the expedient most effective probably in 'Dora,' which we know as 'Diplomacy,' but in accordance with all contemporary ideals hopelessly theatrical and mechanical in form.

### The Aid of Science.

Some of the most obvious means of former writers have been rendered altogether unnecessary by scientific advances in the equipment of the theatre. It is a popular theory that improved lighting of the stage led to the disappearance of the "aside." The facial expression of the actor can indicate what had in earlier period to be spoken. Then the telephone has done its part in making the aside an impossible aid to the dramatist. The telephone has indeed taken the place of the confidant of tragedy. Imagine the distressed heroines of Corneille and Racine talking their woes into the receiver.

### Emphasis Less Necessary.

So authors are undoubtedly spared the trouble now of underlining and explaining and repeating as they did in the older days. Even the movies have had their share in making the public grasp the situation of the characters more promptly than they used to. In all probability the device of preparing an audience for what is to come and then keeping it always ahead of the actors is as important in a technical way as it ever was.

It seems probable that other rules have retained to this day much of the effectiveness that the disciples of the well made play claimed for them. Yet they must with the greatest exactitude be adapted to the conditions of the present time. They must keep abreast step with the changes in the public mind. Not the least reason for the importance of this necessity is the resentment of any process that may be mistaken for rubbing it in.

There is nothing more trying to the self-esteem of a playwright than the intimation that he is so dull he must have special instruction as to what is taking place before his eyes.

The "fly" public of the present day would instantly lose interest in the work of any dramatist who seemed to find it necessary to hammer in what they ought to know for their enjoyment of a play.

### The Vanished Aside.

Even as modern a critic as Francisque Sarcey raised his voice on behalf of the "aside" which seemed for so many years indispensable to the playwright. Sarcey believed it an important aid to construction. When the critics and younger playwrights of France began to protest against the artificiality of the device he came to its defence. He drew an analogy between a sonnet in which the poet had by scrupulous labor succeeded in eliminating some certain letter of the alphabet.

"It may be difficult," said the critic in effect, "to compose a sonnet in which for instance the letter 'e' does not appear and the poet is to be congratulated on his industry and skill. But of what value is this achievement? What difference does it make to the world whether this particular letter appears in the words or not? It would be much better to have it there if it added beauty to the poem than to avoid its presence as a mere trick of writing."

And so it is with the speech aside. It may be possible to write a play without using this convention of the playwright's art. Already dramatists have succeeded at this task, but what is the value of this achievement? It is much more important that the author use the speech aside and thereby render his work interesting and dramatic than to regard, as a triumph of his skill, the fact that he has been able to ignore this device throughout his work.

Thus wrote the pontifical Papa Sarcey in the later years of his life. Yet in the short interval since his defence of this old expedient it has altogether fallen into disuse. The writer cannot recall a modern play during the last season which contained any intimation that the author had ever heard of such a trick in his trade.

How different were the bad old playwrights of a score of years ago—those the skilled, mind you, since they would never have yielded to such a temptation. Sometimes an aside which could only be considered as a psychological and mental process in any case was overheard by another character in a play.

"Then my father will come to me," the heroine might say aside to inform the audience of her conclusion from what she has seen or heard.

The villain, who must, to accord with the theory of the "aside," also have been a mindreader, overhearing her, would say: "Her father, ah! And not the duke."

Then the jig was up. But it was only a conscienceless playwright who would manhandle the poor old "aside" in this fashion.

### Philharmonic Ends Its Concert Tour

The New York Philharmonic Orchestra began the tenth and last week of its coast-to-coast tour on Decoration Day at London, Ont., and played the remainder of the week at Toronto, Watertown, N. Y.; Ottawa, Montreal and Burlington, Vt. The concert in Toronto was the second Philharmonic performance given at that city this season, the orchestra having played there on the evening of March 21 under the direction of Henry Hadley.

At the end of the concert at Burlington, Vt., members of the orchestra took the train for New York. The orchestra will cherish the remembrance of a cordiality and appreciation extended to them throughout their entire tour, which was a rare demonstration of a country-wide love of music, apart from the interest in the Philharmonic Society as America's oldest orchestra.

It matters can be adjusted satisfactorily with the musical union for an extension of the time permitted for orchestra rehearsals contracts for next season will receive the attention of the Philharmonic management immediately after the adjustment is reached. It is possible that the number of musicians constituting the orchestra for the coming season will be determined by the outcome of the negotiations with the union in reference to rehearsals and to the minimum salary for a stated number of concerts a week.

The percentage of renewals of Philharmonic subscriptions for next season is to date considerably above that of previous seasons, and new orders for all Philharmonic series indicate an interest on the part of the public which is exceedingly gratifying to the society. Seats for the series at the Metropolitan Opera House under the direction of Mengelberg and Bonzky will remain on sale at the Philharmonic box office until June 5. On and after that date this series will be sold with the seats for the Carnegie Hall concerts at the Philharmonic office at the eastern entrance to the Carnegie Hall building.

**ORGAN SCHOOL COMMENCEMENT**  
The twentieth annual commencement of the Guilford Organ School, under the direction of Dr. William C. Carl, will be held in the First Presbyterian Church tomorrow evening. The programme will be by members of the graduating class. The gold medal of the school will be conferred on the San Diego Exposition, who will be the guest of honor.



Joseph Santley and Miss Ivy Sawyer appearing in vaudeville at the New Brighton Theatre. Mr. Santley is one of the many Lambs engaged in the public Gamble at the Hippodrome.



The Fairbanks twins in "Two Little Girls in Blue"—G. M. Cohan Theatre.

### Gus Edwards Revue in Vaudeville Bill

Headline Attraction at the Palace—Programmes at Other Houses.

Gus Edwards' "Song Revue" will play a return engagement at the Palace this week as the headline attraction. Edwards himself heads the cast, which includes Hazel and Alice Furness, Chester Fredericks and other proteges. Chic Sale will portray his gallery of rural types in "The Country Sunday School Benefit." Others will be Yvette Rugel, William and Joe Mandel, the Patricolas, George N. Brown, Harry and Grace Ellsworth and the Three Bobs.

The chief acts at other vaudeville houses follow:

**RIVERSIDE**—Lillian Shaw, John Steel.  
**EIGHTY-FIRST STREET**—Joseph E. Howard and company, Wesley Barry in the photoplay, "Bob Hampton of Placer," ALHAMBRA—Helen Ware, "Flashes," ROYAL—Buster Santos and Jacques Hayes, Herschel Henlers.  
**BROADWAY**—Eddie Clark, Glenn and Jenkins.  
**COLISEUM**—Charles Mack and company, Billy Glatton.  
**REGENCY**—Fenton and Fields, the Alexander Kids.  
**AMERICAN**—Elizabeth Solt, Foster and Seamon.  
**PROCTOR'S FIFTH AVENUE**—Al K. Hall, D. H.  
**PROCTOR'S TWENTY-THIRD STREET**—Mildred Harris in the photoplay, "Old Dad"; Larry Semon in the film comedy, "The Bakery."  
**PROCTOR'S FIFTY-EIGHT STREET**—Lillian and Anna Roth, Miss Isolation.  
**PROCTOR'S ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-FIFTH STREET**—Walter C. Percival and Renee Noel, Harry Price.  
The usual Sunday concert will be given at the Winter Garden.

### Novelties at Seaside and Suburban Resorts

The ballroom at George C. Tillyou's Steeplechase Park, Coney Island, which is free to the visitors, is proving the most popular section of the amusement park, especially so with those who enjoy the modern dance steps. Two orchestras furnish the music for continuous dancing. The old fashioned waltz and two step have their place also on the programme. The race course is another attraction and both tracks are operating daily.

One of the most talked of attractions in amusement parks this season is Mme. Breng's golden horse, now appearing in the circus at Luna Park, Coney Island. It is a spectacular achievement, attracting notice first when Mme. Breng, painted with gold paint and riding on her golden horse, led the big Luna Park opening parade on May 14. Harold Stern's band is proving a magnet in drawing music lovers and pleasure seekers to the Brighton Beach baths. The swimming and diving pool is the scene of great activity daily, as a number of champion and near champion female swimmers and fancy divers are practicing for the water carnival to be held here next Saturday afternoon. The handball courts and medicine ball field also have their quota of devotees throughout the week.

Surf bathing 500 feet above the level



Miss Roberta Arnold, leading woman with Frank Craven in his comedy, "The First Year," at the Little Theatre.



Miss Isabel Withers and George M. Cohan in "The Tavern"—Hudson Theatre.



### Marilynn Miller Rarely Ever Idle

Star of 'Sally' Keeps Up Her Singing and Dancing Lessons.

Since December 21 last Miss Marilynn Miller's name has been in a train of incidents connected with the New Amsterdam Theatre. She has been hailed as Broadway's newest star. Known as a nimble dancer who appeared for a few moments and melted again into scenery in "The Pollies," Miss Miller's success has been unusual. Her voice, both speaking and singing, her dramatic moments and her dancing have all been the revelation of heretofore untried dancing charms surprised Broadway.

How did she accomplish so much? For even a glance would tell the most cynical that she is still in her early twenties. It would not be difficult to imagine Miss Miller, after her triumph and a long run assured, resting on her oars, so to speak.

Success has only been a spur to her to greater things. When the theatres close for the night and Broadway takes on what is left of midnight gaiety the star of "Sally" is never seen in the nocturnal haunts. She returns to her summer place at Great Neck and soon after midnight is asleep.

She is up at 7 o'clock and after a game of handball and a shower she has a light breakfast and returns to her dancing lessons. She loves dancing and realizes too that her muscles must be always flexible. Just now she is taking up a new form of dancing not for the public but to learn of its intricacies and better to improve her art.

Every day except Wednesday and Saturday—matinee days—she takes a singing lesson. She also has a daily French lesson. She also is the embodiment of health.

"Any girl may have health," she says, "so long as she keeps her thoughts healthy and exercises her body properly."

She loves the stage, her audience and her family. Once a week she drops into the office of her manager, F. Ziegfeld, Jr., in the New Amsterdam Theatre Building. It was Mr. Ziegfeld who saw a potential star in Miss Miller when others saw merely a dancer. She always is eager for any suggestions that may improve her performance in "Sally."

**IN BROOKLYN THEATRES.**  
The Four Marx Brothers will be the headlines at the Orpheum in Brooklyn this week. Others will be Bronson and Baldwin, Eddie Ross and Charles Leonard Fletcher.

Prisco will top the bill at the Bushwick.  
Belle Baker will be the featured performer at the Boro Park.  
Joseph Santley and Ivy Sawyer in their new revue, "Klick-Kick," will be the chief act at the New Brighton.

Low Shimky Hilton and Ned Norton will be the headlines at the Flatbush.

Mel Klee will be the premiere entertainer at the Columbia, Far Rockaway.

Miss Constance Talmadge in the film comedy "Lessons in Love" will be the photoplay attraction at the Strand.

### Miss Billie Shaw in Sketches and "Broadway Whirl" Novelties of Week

**TUESDAY.**  
**SELWYN THEATRE (Madison)**—Miss Billie Shaw, short story writer and vaudeville headliner, will be presented by William Seabury in six dramatic sketches of her own composition at the first of three special matinees. They will include a farce, a comedy, two tragedies, a drama and a protean novelty. She will be supported by a specially selected cast. The other performances will be given on Wednesday and Friday afternoons.

**WEDNESDAY.**  
**TIMES SQUARE THEATRE**—The Artists Producers Corporation, direction of John Henry Mears, will present "The Broadway Whirl," described as a five star musical intoxicant, with Richard Carle, Blanche Ring, Charles Winninger, Winona Winter and Jay Gould as the members of the constellation, and a large supporting company, including the McCarthy Sisters, Warner Gault, Maxson and Brown, the Janet Sisters, Lucille Ballantine and Virginia Birmingham. This is an intimate revue in two acts and has a score of musical and dancing numbers. There is no plot nor attempt at elaborate scenic changes, all efforts having been bent toward the development of comedy. The dialogue and comedy scenes were written by Thomas J. Gray, the music by Harry Tierney and George Gershwin and the lyrics by Joseph McCarthy, Mr. Carle, Bud de Sylva and Mr. Mears. The production has been staged by Bert French.

### Theatre Guild to Present 'The Cloister'

The Theatre Guild, which gives a special performance every year for its subscribers, will present "The Cloister," by Emile Verhaeren, at the Garrick Theatre this afternoon and evening. The two performances of the play are made necessary because of the large number of subscribers. No tickets have been on sale, and no one except subscribers will be admitted.

Emanuel Reicher has directed the production of the play, and a large cast has been assembled. As the action is laid in a cloister, there are only men in the play, except in one scene in a church, where there is a crowd of worshippers. George Renavent, Frank Reicher, Brandon Peters and Albert Perry have the principal parts, and others appearing are Brakins Sanford, Henry Travers, Edgar Steinhil, Philip Wood, George H. Fronger and Walter Butterfield. The settings and costumes were designed by Sheldon K. Vile. The English text of the play is by Gorman Edwards.

### "Lightnin'" Leaving, So Broadway Hears

Could Stay Here Indefinitely, but Chicago Wants Golden Record Breaker.

It appears to be pretty definitely settled that "Lightnin'" in which Frank Bacon is rapidly approaching his 1,300th performance at the Gaiety Theatre, will leave that playhouse at the end of this summer, after having broken all standing and running engagement records. It could go on and break them seemingly for three years more, for it is still playing to a capacity business of about \$15,000 a week.

But A. L. Erlanger wants this John Golden attraction for the Blackstone Theatre in Chicago, where the larger house would permit of a capacity mark of \$20,000 a week. So John Golden will send it there at the end of August, after having been in doubt for some time what to do with it, and as he has a contract for the Gaiety, the manager will fill up that house immediately with Winchell Smith's new comedy, "The Wheel." This play, the first that Smith has written single handed in several years, is ready for production. It was considered so well finished when it was tried out recently that the author has not revised it, a process that few plays escape before coming to New York from the road.

"Personality." William A. Brady's production, does not appear to be a possible entrant in the Broadway sweepstakes for some time, if it ever appears there. This play by Col. Jasper Ewing Brady had a trial spin at short time, ago with a cast including Crane and Henry D. McCoy, and instead of being snapped immediately into Brady's Playhouse, as was expected, it created an impression that it would be up for repairs, despite a personal hit scored by Dixey.

It centres about Wall Street, dealing with a young Lochinvar who came from the West and made good in a broker's office almost over night, after starting in by cleaning windows there. The stock market theme is one beloved of Brady, and it was in a similar play, "Opportunity," that his son-in-law, Crane, appeared last year. Now L. Lawrence Weber's production of William Le Baron's play, "Nobody's Money," founded on a corresponding motif, appears to have a clear field in the race which it entered to reach the New York public first.

Business in the theatrical district is falling off to a marked extent, even allowing for the usual slackening due to the warm weather. Sam H. Harris, who closed three attractions last night rather than have them suffer the blight which appears due this summer, was quoted as having told an acquaintance that the last week was the worst he had ever seen among theatres in all his experience in the show business.

Howard Kyle, secretary of the Actors' Fidelity League, rises to correct paragraphs printed here recently about the resignations of Lowell Sherman and Miss Nora Bayes from the Fidelity. Without denying the correctness of the announcement that they had resigned, which had not hitherto been known to the outside public, he makes this qualification:

"In all fairness to us, the facts should be shown that Lowell Sherman mailed his resignation to this office on May 1, 1920, while Miss Bayes sent hers on September 4, 1920. Neither Mr. Sherman or Miss Bayes stated why they desired to withdraw, nor do we yet know with certainty their reasons. It should be clear from the dates I have cited that these resignations are old news so far as the league is concerned, and have no significance as regards its vitality."

There have been numerous plays about the humorous quarrels of Irishmen in business together, and of Hebrews in trade together, but there has not within a number of recent years, if at all, been a play about an Irishman and a Hebrew as partners in business. Now the stage is to have one. It is a play called "Children," which John Cope has just placed in rehearsal. It was written by Emily Nytray, Herbert Hall Winslow and Philip Bartholomae.

The part of the Jew is to be played by Hyman of the success of Strauss operettas, "The Last Waltz," at the Century Theatre. Until the advent of "Phoebe of Quality Street" he had been unknown in the world of the drama.

Few know that he is by profession an architect, and is well established, with offices at 303 Fifth avenue. Play writing is by way of being his hobby. He studied it under Fletcher Huges at Columbia, and he has a good command of the language. He wrote the entire wedge into the theatre for himself by adapting a foreign play and submitting it to J. J. Shubert. The latter liked it so well he commissioned Dunn to do several more, and now the architect-author is reported to have half a dozen manuscripts in the Shubert offices. Designing houses is by way of being his hobby now.

Very little seems to be known generally about Edward Delaney Dunn, who adapted the ill fated musical comedy version of Sir James M. Barrie's "Quality Street" and collaborated in the libretto of the success of Strauss operettas, "The Last Waltz," at the Century Theatre. Until the advent of "Phoebe of Quality Street" he had been unknown in the world of the drama.

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"Boy Scouts of America," a Kinetograph review, soon will be released for theatres throughout the United States. It records the visit of 101 picked Boy Scouts to the international "Jamboree" in England last July.

Supporting Roscoe (Fatty) Arbuckle in his next Paramount picture, "Should a Man Marry?" will be Miss Mary Thurman, Harriet Hammond, Winifred Greenwood, Maude Wayne and Gertrude Short, Sydney Bracey, Clarence Gladd, Allan Durnall, John McKinnon and Lucret Littlefield.

William Farnum, on his vacation in Europe, has reached Italy and will spend a couple of weeks at the Italian lakes. His birthday is July 4, and he always spends this anniversary at his harbor home, so he is expected back about July 1.

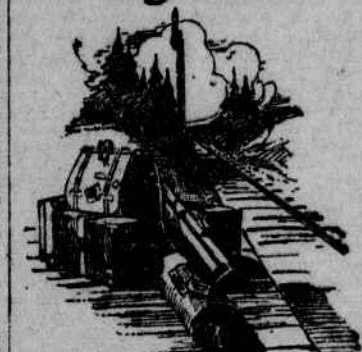
### BURLESQUE AT COLUMBIA.

"Peek-a-Boo" continues its merry way at the Columbia Theatre. The three comically amusing scenes of the piece, known as the lion taming scene, the boxing scene and the manhandling scene, have been greatly developed by Bobby Clark and his associates.



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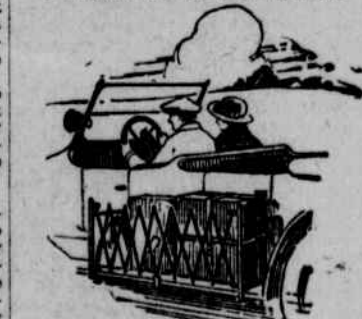
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